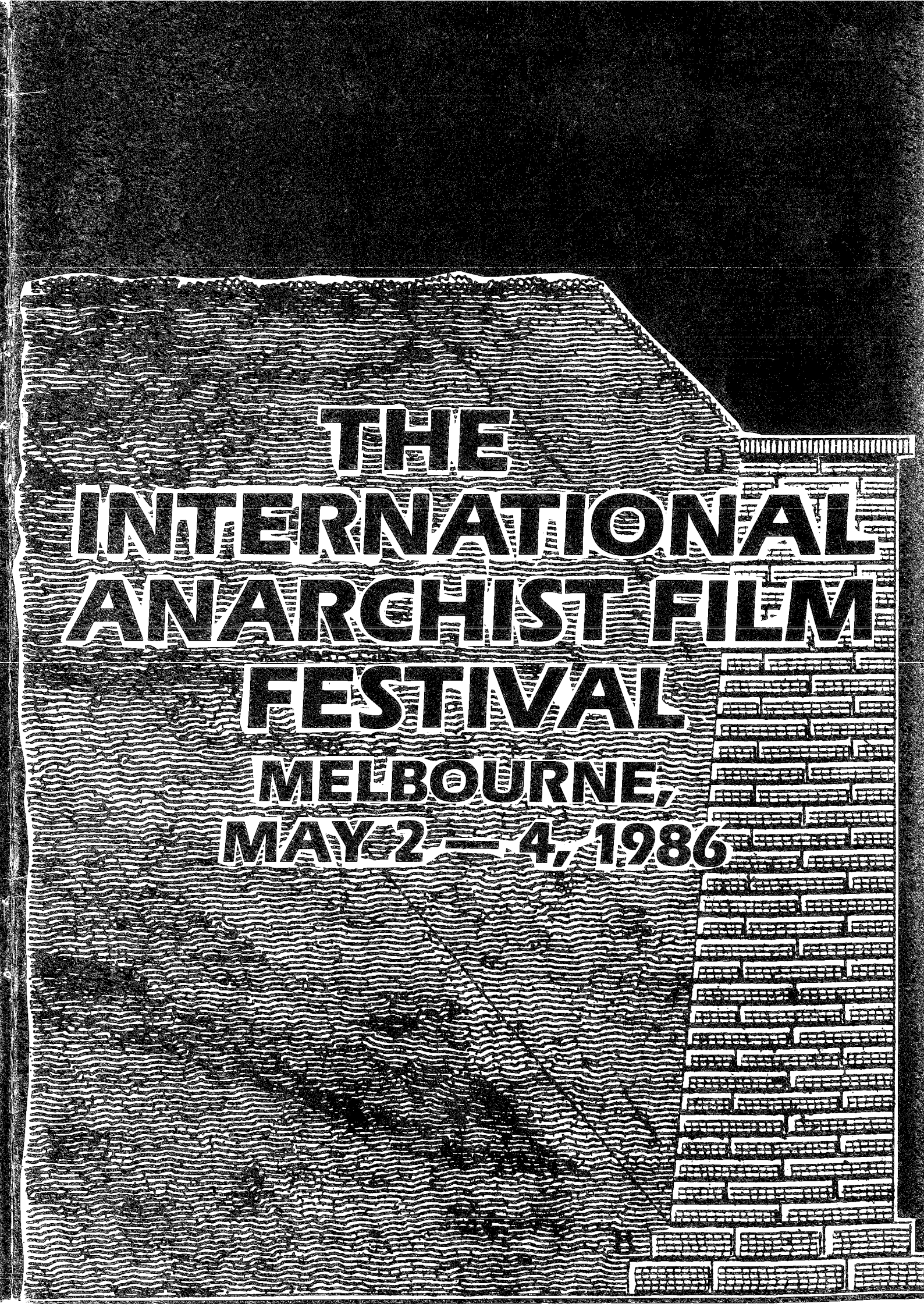
THE
INTERNATIONAL
ANARCHIST FILM
FESTIVAL
MELBOURNE
MAY 2 — 4, 1986

First published 1986

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THE INTERNATIONAL ANARCHIST FILM FESTIVAL

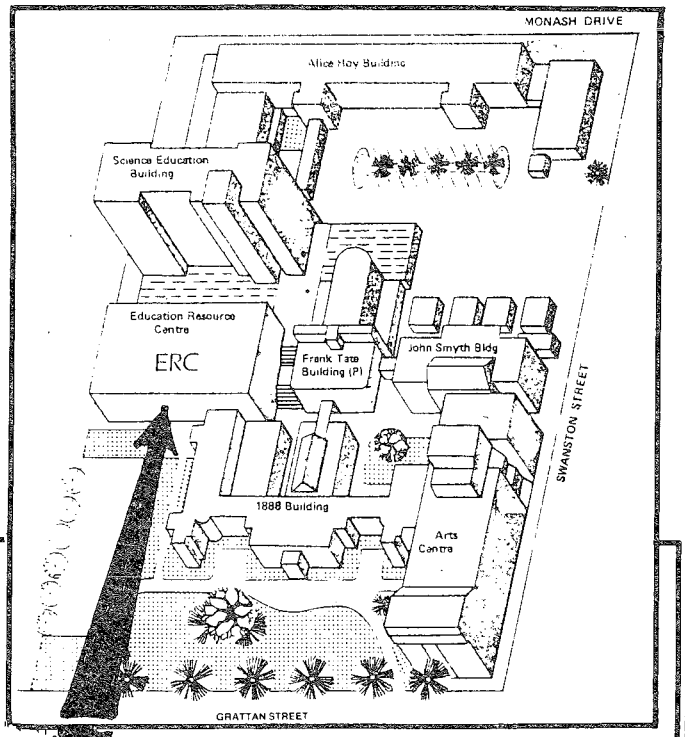
MELBOURNE, MAY 2 — 4, 1986

LOCATION OF VENUES

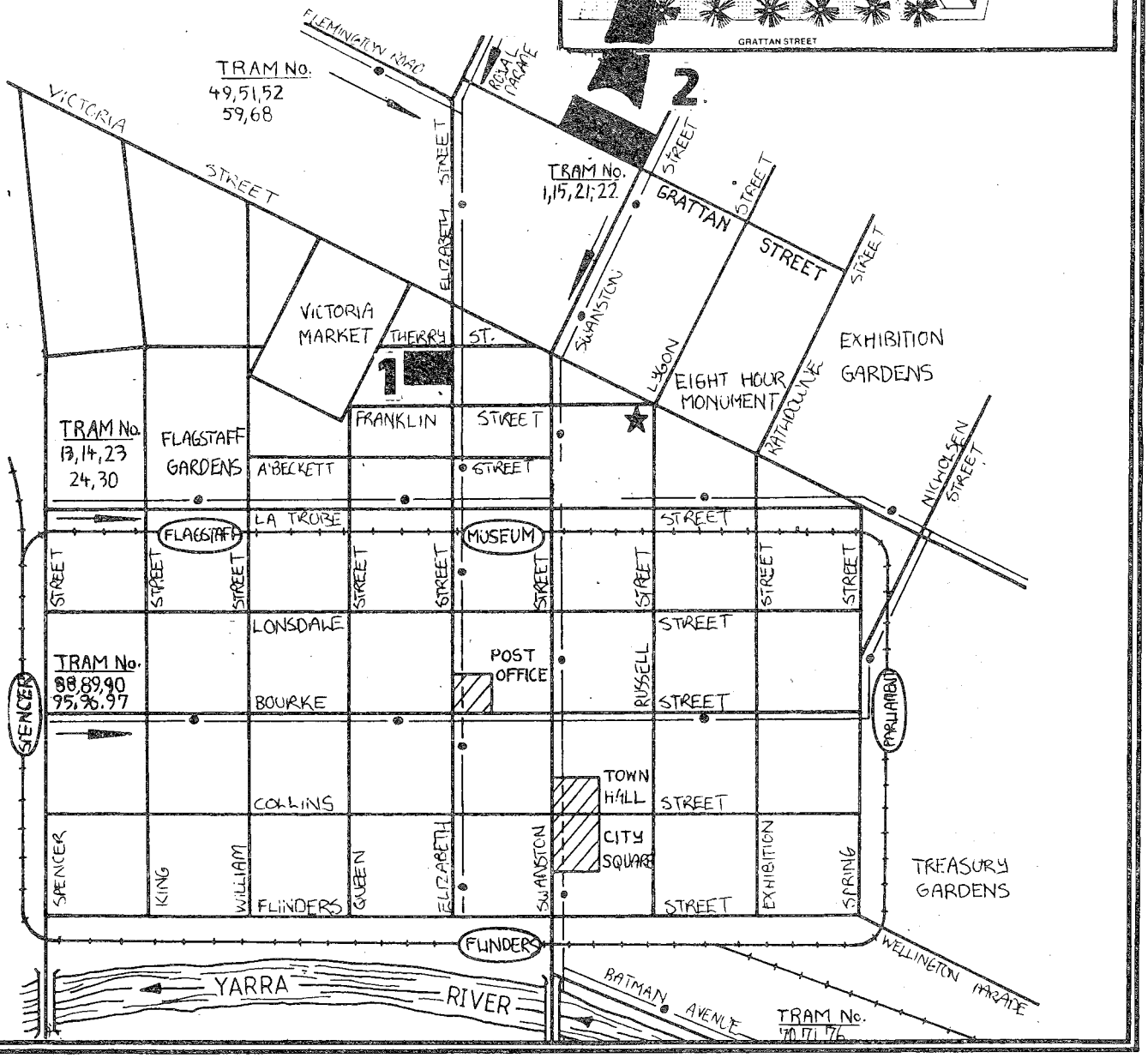
FRIDAY MAY 2
(6pm — 11pm)
YWCA Auditorium (Ground Floor), 489 Elizabeth Street, Melbourne.

SATURDAY MAY 3
(10am — 11pm)
Melbourne College of Advanced Education, Theatrette, ERC Building, Swanston Street, Carlton.

SUNDAY MAY 4
(10am — 5.30pm)
Melbourne College of Advanced Education, Theatrette, ERC Building, Swanston Street, Carlton.



1 YWCA Auditorium (Ground Floor),
2 Melbourne College of Advanced Education,



INTRODUCTION

The International Anarchist Film Festival (Melbourne, May 2 — 4, 1986) represents the first opportunity in Australia to bring together a comprehensive collection of film and video material that encompasses the ideas, traditions and concerns of anarchism and the anarchists themselves.

The first question asked, of course, when we talk of an "Anarchist" film festival is, "What is anarchism?". We offer this definition:

> Anarchists believe that it is not only possible or desirable, but necessary to create a totally new, non-hierarchical society. A society in which the domination of nature by humans, within human society itself and the society by the state is completely abolished — technologically, institutionally, culturally and in the very rationality and sensibility of the individual.
>
> Anarchism challenges not only class divisions but all hierarchies; not only material exploitation but also the domination of the mind and the spirit.
>
> Anarchism's aim is the creation of a truly free and autonomous individual and believe that this can best be achieved by the development of self-managed social, political and economic groupings, voluntarily co-operating together to achieve goals society wide.

In selecting films for our Festival some of the priorities that come to mind are: the depiction of non-hierarchical ways of relating and organising; material from self-defined anarchist film makers and films containing central anarchist characters (rather than Hollywood's parodies). To bring the practice of anarchism into sharper focus we have chosen films that depict anarchist inspired events and activities inspirational to people interested in non-authoritarian alternatives.

We are pleased to be screening many films never before seen in Australia — *Signals Through The Flames*, *Inciting to Riot* and *Property* to name a few. Many of these films are available for distribution.

We take great pleasure in screening the only known film recordings of the anarchist and feminist, Emma Goldman, best known for her autobiography, *Living My Life*. The first, a short newsreel, was made on her brief return from exile (in Russia and Europe) to the United States in 1934. She also appears as the narrator to the historic film, *Homenage a Durruti*, made by the film units of the Spanish Anarchists during the Spanish Civil War. To mark the 50th anniversary of the Spanish revolution we include an article about the early Spanish anarchist cinema.

There are many films that we have been unable to show with expense and lack of sub-titling being the most important obstacles. In forming an *Anarchist Film Archive* here in Melbourne we hope that it will be possible to arrange subtitling and the regular import of films not currently available. A substantial collection of information on over 100 films has been gathered in the process of organising this Festival and we invite enquiries about this material.

This Film Festival has been made possible by the generous financial support of anarchists and people sympathetic to the ideals of anarchism both here in Australia and abroad. We are indebted to anarchist groups in Australia, Europe and North America who have given so much time to us in our search for suitable films.

We have been inspired by the overwhelming enthusiasm for the success of this Festival. We hope that you will be similarly inspired by the events and characters depicted and by the ideas and practice that is anarchism today.

Hilary May & Patrick Watson

FILM FESTIVAL PROGRAMME

FRIDAY, MAY 2, 1986

VENUE: YWCA AUDITORIUM

TIME	TITLE	FORMAT
6.00 PM	OPENING	
6.30 PM	ZERO DE CONDUITE (ZERO FOR CONDUCT)	16mm B&W
7.15 PM	FREE VOICE OF LABOUR: THE JEWISH ANARCHISTS	16mm Colour
8.15 PM	INTERMISSION	
8.30	WE AIM TO PLEASE	16mm Colour
8.45 PM	LA CECILIA	16mm Colour
10.40 PM	CLOSE	

SATURDAY, MAY 3, 1986

VENUE: MELBOURNE COLLEGE OF ADVANCED EDUCATION

10.00 AM	DE TODA LA VIDA (ALL OUR LIVES)	Video Colour
11.00 AM	ELSIE: A STUDY OF A COLLECTIVE	16mm Colour
11.15 AM	WINSTANLEY	16mm Colour
1.00 PM	LUNCH	
2.00 PM	MEETING WITH THE ENEMY	Video B&W
2.30 PM	LIBERA AMORE MIO (LIBERA, MY LOVE)	16mm Colour
4.10 PM	INTERMISSION	
4.30 PM	ANARCHISM IN AMERICA	16mm Colour
5.45 PM	DISCUSSION BREAK / DINNER	
6.45 PM	INCITING TO RIOT	Video B&W
7.30 PM	PROPERTY	Video Colour
9.10 PM	INTERMISSION	
9.30 PM	SIGNALS THROUGH THE FLAMES	Video Colour
10.40 PM	CLOSE	

SUNDAY, MAY 4, 1986

VENUE: MELBOURNE COLLEGE OF ADVANCED EDUCATION

10.00 AM	EMMA GOLDMAN: LOVE, ANARCHY AND OTHER AFFAIRS	Video B&W
11.00 AM	EMMA GOLDMAN NEWSREEL	Video B&W
11.05 AM	HOMENAGE A DURRUTI (HOMAGE TO DURRUTI)	Video B&W
11.15 AM	INTERMISSION	
11.30 AM	THE WOBBLIES	16mm Colour
1.00 PM	LUNCH	
2.00 PM	HARRY HOOTON	16mm Colour
3.30 PM	WRITING ON THE WALL	16mm Colour
5.30 PM	CLOSE	

THE FILMS

ANARCHISM IN AMERICA

USA, 1981, 75 mins. Colour.

Directors: Steven Fischler and Joel Sucher. Producers: Pacific Street Film Projects. Writers: Kristina Boden, Steven Fischler, Gerald Kagan and Joel Sucher. Editor: Kristina Boden. Photography: Joel Sucher. Music: Russian, Spanish and Italian anarchist songs, Jefferson Airplane, Woody Guthrie, Sex Pistols, The Dead Kennedy's and Lord Short Shirt.

This feature-length documentary is a colorful and provocative survey of anarchism in America in all of its manifestations. The film attempts to dispel popular misconceptions about anarchism — the movement denounced by J. Edgar Hoover as "a menace to the nation" — and examines the development of anarchist philosophy in the U.S. Its origins are examined both as a native American philosophy stemming from 19th century American traditions of individualism and as a foreign ideology brought to America by immigrants such as Emma Goldman and Sacco and Vanzetti. The film also explores anarchist influence on contemporary political struggles, including the anti-nuclear movement and the anti-Vietnam War movement.

Anarchism in America features rare archival footage of significant personalities and events in anarchist history, including Emma Goldman, Peter Kropotkin, the Russian Revolution, and the Spanish Civil War. Also included are interviews with Mollie Steimer, a close friend of Emma Goldman's: Murray Bookchin, author of several books on anarchist theory; Karl Hess, former speechwriter for Barry Goldwater, and now an anarchist; Ed Clark, 1980 Presidential candidate of the Libertarian Party; and poets Kenneth Rexroth and Philip Levine. *Anarchism in America* also features a vibrant musical score, ranging from Russian, Spanish, and Italian revolutionary songs to music by The Jefferson Airplane, Woody Guthrie, The Sex Pistols, The Dead Kennedys (who are also interviewed in the film), and Lord Short Shirt.

Distribution: Cinema Guild (New York)
Available from: National Library of Australia.

LA CECILIA

FRANCE/ITALY, 1976, 113 mins. Colour

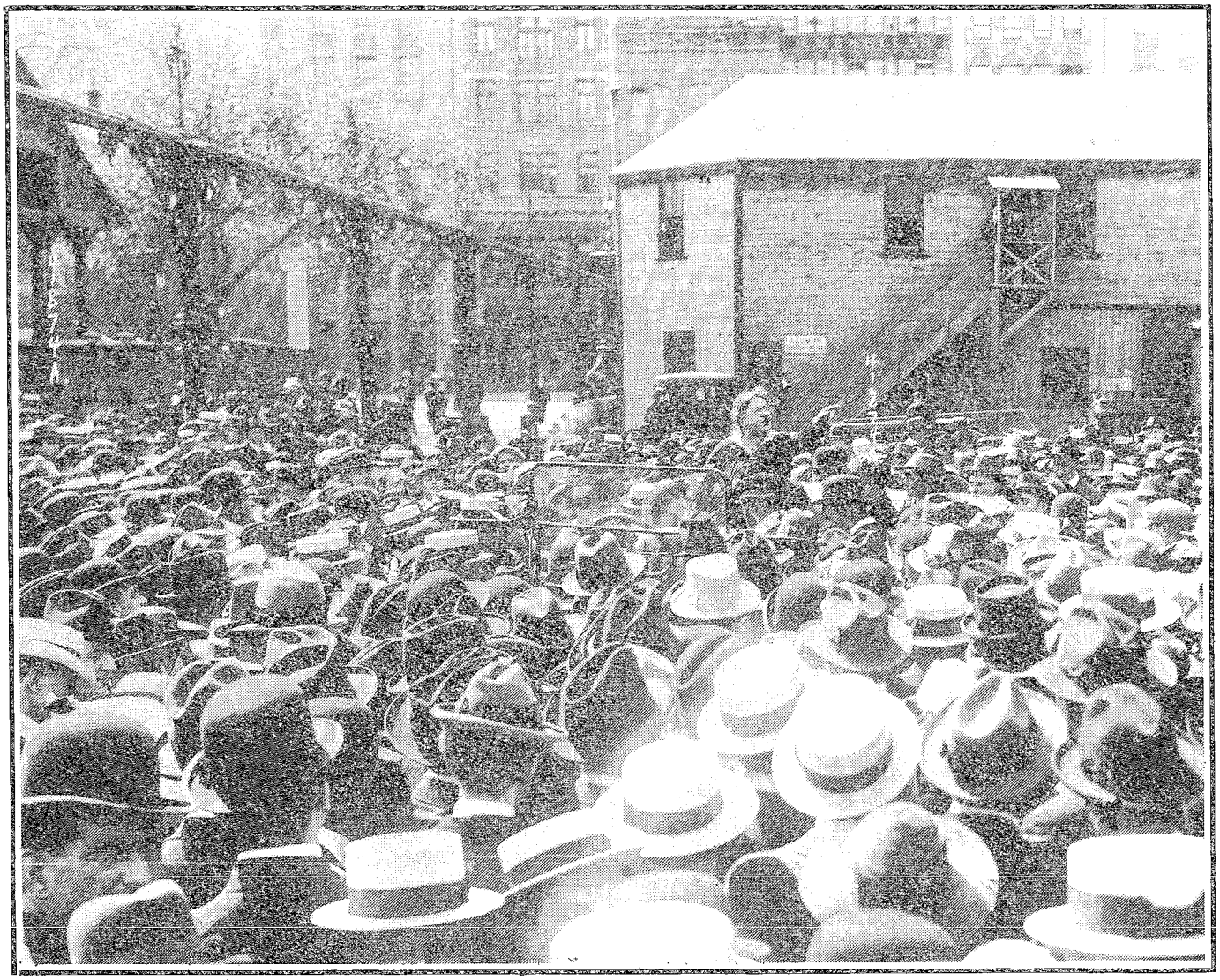
Director: Jean-Louis Comolli. Script: Jean-Louis Comolli, Eduardo de Gregorio, Marianne di Vettimo. Photography: Yann le Masson. Music: Michel Portal. Sound: Tonino Testa.
Cast: Massimo Foschi, Maria Carta, Vittorio Mezzogiorno, Biaggio Pelligra, Giancarlo Pannese.

La Cecilia follows the struggles of a group of Italian anarchists to form a commune in Brazil — the La Cecilia of the title — from its inception in 1887 to its dissolution three years later.

Comolli's intention at the outset of the film's production was to make a film '. . . about history as it is now . . . as an area of contradictions, of struggles, a history which is always alive amongst us". The first contradiction concerns the setting up of the commune itself — the land is granted to them by the Emperor of Brazil who is interested in the ideas put forward by Giovanni Rossi in his book "A Socialist Commune" and so he invites its author to set up such a commune in Brazil. Thus, the anarchists become colonialists — a fact constantly reiterated when they first arrive in Brazil.

Questions of personal cowardice (leaving Italy at a crucial time) and splits between those anarchists who see themselves as intellectuals and others who are more interested in the practicalities of the commune such as farming arise early on. But it is the problems of women and the family that become central to the film. It is when families join the commune that it becomes apparent that making a decisive break with the old society requires more than this experiment will allow.

Print from: National Library of Australia.



Emma Goldman makes a point in *Anarchism in America*

ELSIE: A STUDY OF A COLLECTIVE

AUSTRALIA, 1977, 12 mins. Black and White Video

Directors: Liz Rust and Tina Colston

Elsie women's refuge collective is an example of an alternative style organisation that is not structured by a hierarchy.

The film looks at the way it functions and the participation of the residents in the decision making process. For many women this is the first opportunity they have had to engage in this positive experience.

Print from: National Library of Australia

EMMA GOLDMAN: LOVE, ANARCHY AND OTHER AFFAIRS

USA, 1985, 60 mins. Video

A working rehearsal tape of the New York Play by Jessica Litwack.

Director: Anne Bogart, Writer and Actor: Jessica Litwack. Music: "Person to Person".

Emma Goldman: Love, Anarchy and Other Affairs takes place on the evening of September 9, 1901 as Emma

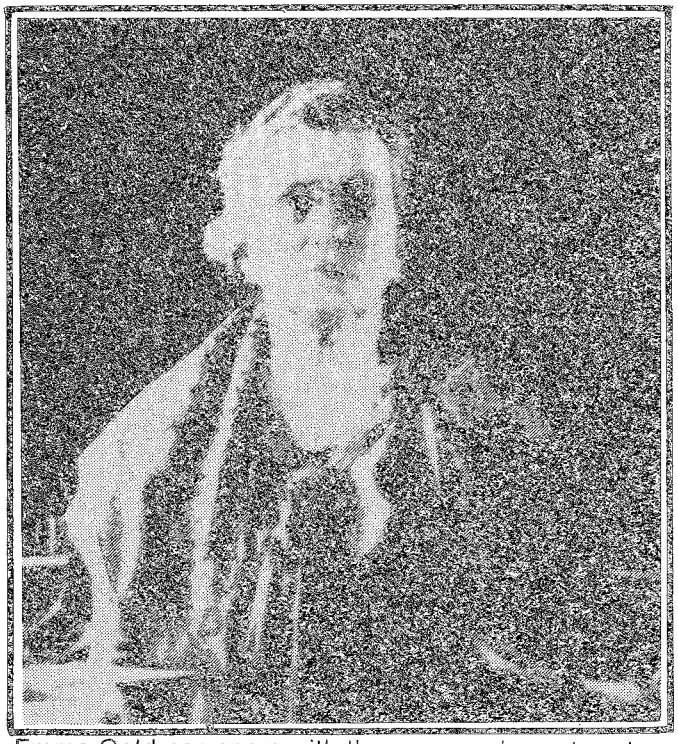
Goldman, anarchist and feminist, hunted by the FBI and the police in connection with the assassination of President McKinley, prepares an escape from Chicago to Canada.

As Goldman waits for her friend Max to return to his apartment where she is hiding, she recounts the story of her emergence as a political figure, and reveals her feelings of love, fear, disillusionment and passion that surround her life and work. In a series of memories, public speeches and private moments a new look at Emma emerges.

Jessica Litwack has presented "Emma Goldman: Love, Anarchy and Other Affairs" throughout the United States. It was most recently seen at the Manhattan Theatre Club.

Print kindly made available by Jessica Litwack.
Available from Anarchist Film Archive.

Jessica Litwack as Emma Goldman in *Emma Goldman: Love, Anarchy and Other Affairs*



Emma Goldman spars with the press on her return to America in 1934 — *Emma Goldman newsreel*

EMMA GOLDMAN NEWSREEL

USA, 1934. B&W Video

The press quizzes Emma Goldman on her brief return to America after 15 years in exile. Permitted to return for 90 days only to present a series of lectures on *The Drama* Emma shows her inimitable style in this brief newsreel. Asked what she thinks of Italy she replies, "Fine . . . without Mussolini!"

Kindly made available by Pacific Street Film Projects (New York).
Available from: Anarchist Film Archive (Melbourne).

FREE VOICE OF LABOR: THE JEWISH ANARCHISTS

USA, 1980, 55 minutes. Colour

Produced and Directed: Steven Fischler and Joel Sucher.
Producer: Pacific Street Film Projects.

This film paints a dramatic portrait of immigrant life in the United States as seen through the eyes of the sweatshop workers who made up the Jewish anarchist movement and published the newspaper that became their voice for eighty-seven years. Large numbers of Jews from the villages and cities of Eastern Europe came to the United States during the immigration waves of the 1880's and 1890's. The majority of them settled in New York's Lower East Side. Some of these uprooted Jews, quickly disillusioned by the brutal and exploitive working conditions they endured in the sweatshops, were drawn to radical politics and espoused anarchism. The Jewish anarchist (in common with all anarchists) believed in the possibility of a society without government. Their movement was dedicated to freedom — freedom for the individual, freedom from the State, freedom from the Church and religion in general, and freedom from economic exploita-

tion. The movement reached its greatest influence between 1880 and World War 1. The Jewish anarchists came together to build trade unions (including The International Ladies Garment Workers Union and the Amalgamated Clothing Workers Union), or organize schools (such as the experimental Ferrer Free School), to sponsor lectures and discussions, as well as dances and a wide range of cultural events. The newspaper *Freie Arbeiter Stimme (Free Voice of Labor)* from its inception in 1890 was both the clarion of the Jewish Anarchists' Society and an important forum for the development of early American Yiddish writers and poets.

Through interviews with participants in the Jewish anarchist movement — many of whom are now in their 70's and 80's — and by weaving together stills, newsreel footage, selections from old motion pictures (including a rare clip from a Yiddish feature entitled *Uncle Moses)* and Yiddish songs and poems of work and struggle, *Free Voice of Labor* documents the contributions of the Jewish anarchists to the fledgling U.S. labor movement and the developing Yiddish culture.

Distribution: Cinema Guild (New York)
Available from: National Library of Australia.

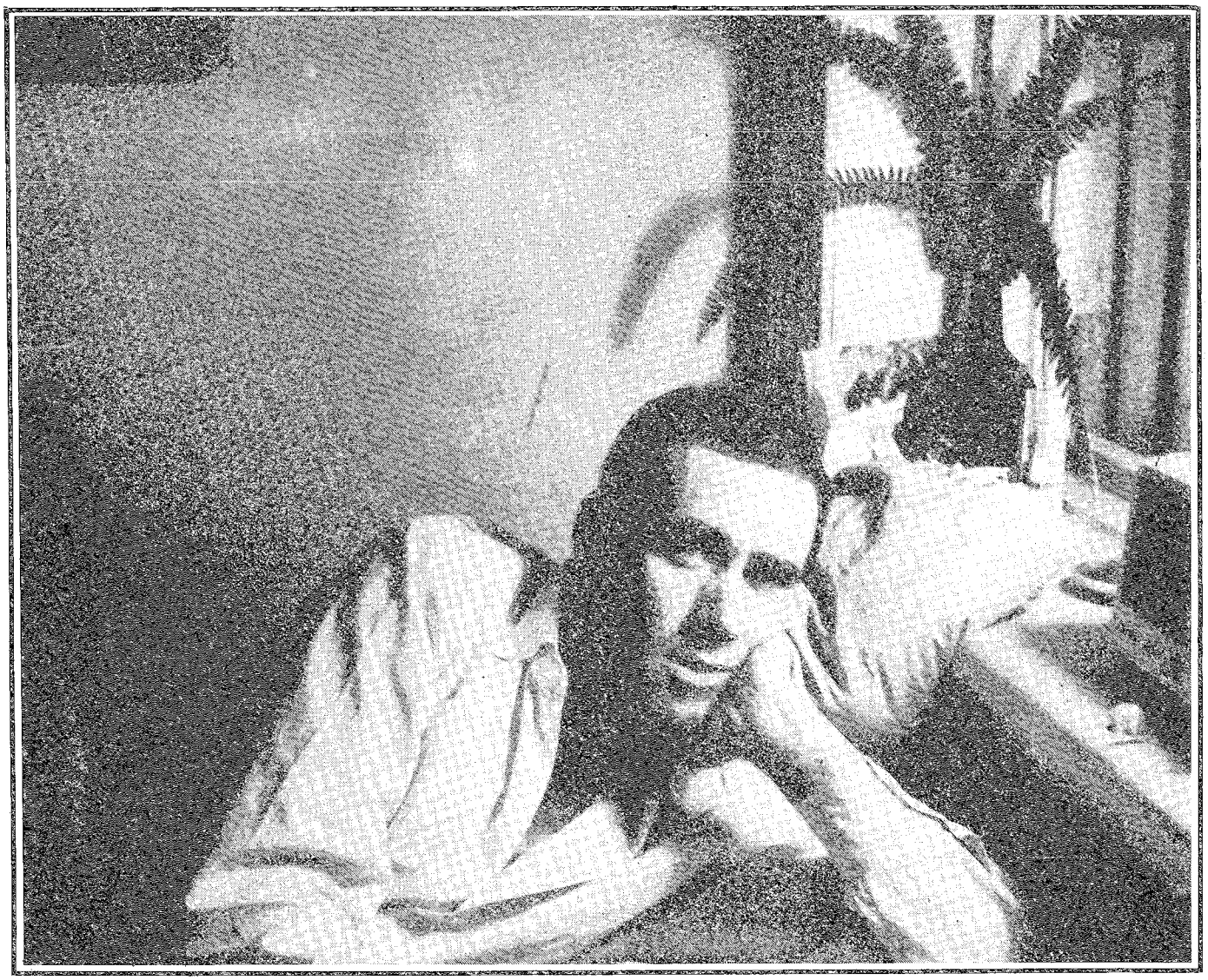
HARRY HOOTON

AUSTRALIA, 1970, 83 mins. Colour

Directors and Producers: Arthur and Corinne Cantrill

The film-makers tribute to their friend Harry Hooton, anarchist-poet-philosopher who died in Sydney in 1961. Hooton's philosophy has had a great influence on the Cantrills' film-making. He defined art as "the communication of emotion to matter". The film ranges from tight documentary style to a "more liberated, free-flowing style" where the editing is minimal, the sequences planned and juxtaposed in the camera. This reaches its ultimate in the closing sequences where the camera is dispensed with altogether and the previously shot black and white footage is handprinted onto colour stock in superimposed layers with coloured light.

Distribution: Arthur and Corinne Cantrill.
Print from: National Library of Australia.



Harry Hooton

HOMENAGE A DURRUTI (HOMMAGE TO DURRUTI)

SPAIN, 1937, 12 mins. Black and White Video

Directors and Crew: Unknown. Producers: CNT-FAI

This film documents the massive attendance of the Spanish people at the funeral in Barcelona of the popular FAI (Iberian Anarchist Federation) figure — Buenaventura Durruti (1896 — 1936), killed on the Madrid Front during the Spanish Civil War. A major figure in the successful workers' resistance to the fascists in Barcelona he immediately took responsibility for leading an armed column of 3000 anarchist volunteers to liberate Aragon and the major city of Saragossa to the West, an important centre of anarchist activity.

Apart from its value as a record of Spanish anarchist history this film is remarkable for its English narrator is believed to be Emma Goldman, American anarchist and feminist, author of the remarkable autobiography *Living My Life*.

Originally made on 35mm nitrate film this print was discovered by Pacific Street Film Projects of New York, in the archives of the New York Taniment Library after having been stored for many years in the offices of the now extinct Yiddish anarchist newspaper *Free Voice of Labour* (Frei Arbeiter Stimme). After comparing it to the only available newsreel film of Emma Goldman (also screened at this Festival) the discovery of the identity of the previously unknown narrator was suddenly made.

Durruti in Bujaraloz before leaving for the Madrid Front — *Homenage a Durruti.*

Print: Kindly supplied by Pacific Street Film Projects (New York).
Available from: Anarchist Film Archive (Melbourne).

GROWTH OF ANARCHIST CINEMA IN SPAIN DURING THE CIVIL WAR

(1936-1939)

Civil war broke out in Spain on July 19, 1936 when General Franco led a military coup against the legally established Republican government. On April 1, 1939 the war ended with Franco marching victoriously into Madrid.

Non-Intervention agreements signed by the major powers during the so-called "period of appeasement" declared a commitment to ban supplies to either side during the Spanish conflict. However, Italy, Germany and Portugal supplied Franco with planes, arms, ammunition and personnel in flagrant violation of the Agreements and despite the numerous protests of the Republican government. The Non-Intervention Committee ignored these violations. Only Mexico and the Soviet Union (for political reasons) supplied any kind of assistance to the Republican government.

During the years of the war and the bloody repression that followed, it is estimated that more than a million people were killed. Hundreds of thousands fled across the border as refugees.

The strongest single power in Spain at the out-

break of the Civil War was the Anarcho-Syndicalist labor union, the C.N.T. (Confederacion Nacional del Trabajo). On July 19, 1936 the C.N.T.-F.A.I. (Iberian Anarchist Federation, the C.N.T.'s sister organization) and the U.G.T. (the Socialist trade union) mobilized their forces in Barcelona, Madrid and the Basque region to effectively quell the coup. Although the workers emerged triumphant, Franco, encouraged by German and Italian aid, continued his efforts to seize power in the bloody civil war.

In the areas where the militant trade unions prevailed, most of the owners of the large industries and landholders fled or were forcibly ejected from their positions of control. As a result, the unions and village associations all over Spain took over the management of utilities, businesses and farms. The C.N.T.-F.A.I., with over a million members and a long tradition of organization around the anarcho-syndicalist theories of workers' control and libertarian communism, maintained the position that victory over fascism depended on a dual struggle: the war against Franco and the vigorous pursuit of social revolution. This policy placed the C.N.T. in opposition to the Republican government, which maintained a policy of postponing social reforms in favor of pursuing the war effort. Despite these disagreements, a tenuous coalition was concluded.

In the film industry, an efficient conversion to war-time collectivization was made relatively easy because of the existence of modern, well-equipped studios and laboratories in Madrid and Barcelona. These facilities were used cooperatively by the various Popular Front organizations: Socialists, Anarchists, Republicans, Catalan Autonomists and Communists.

Reportage del movimiento revolucionario by Mateo Santos, produced by the C.N.T.-F.A.I., was the first film made by either side after the attempted coup. It contains on the spot footage of the first days of the war.

Throughout 1936, the workers of the C.N.T.-F.A.I. produced both information and propaganda films: these films contain rare footage of the anarchist agricultural and industrial collective experiments and footage of the famous Durruti Brigade on the battle front.

A number of "sindicatos" (local union chapters) of the CNT produced films using their own name. In Barcelona, for example, the CNT created "Spartacus Films". In keepng with the democratic nature of their organisation the majority of workers of the film were chosen by the "s indicato" with the chosen director having the opportunity to nominate only two or three lead actors and his/her cameraperson. Whilst the director generally received a higher wage than the crew there were only small differentials in salaries paid overall.

In 1937, cinema production increased along with intensified factionalization of groups on the Republican side. The differences between the U.S.S.R.-supported Spanish Communist Party and the indigenous C.N.T.-F.A.I. promoted the production of films that explained the ideological disagreements and described the activities of the organizations. The C.N.T. films included *Manifiesto*, *Solidaridad del pueblo con las victimas del fascismo*, *Castilla se libera*, and *Veinte de Noviembre*. Unfortunately, the communists decided to settle the ideological problems by force and in May 1937 used Soviet supplied arms to destroy the anarchist collectives.

In 1938, faced with the increasing support given to Franco by the Fascists, the Republican forces rallied to stage a massive offensive on the various fronts. The C.N.T.-F.A.I. film workers contributed their support in the films *Columna de hierro*, *Frente de Teruel*, and *Teruel ha caido* by Miguel Mutino. A film was also compiled from the footage in the C.N.T. archives in Madrid, *The Will Of A People*.

Efforts are being made to secure copies of films made by the CNT/AIT and it is hoped that, in the future, these will be available for screening in Australia. The 1937 CNT produced documentary *Homenage a Durrutti* is being screened at this Film Festival (please see programme notes).

Original research by Miguel Mesa and Pacific Street Film Projects, New York.

CAN YOU SEE IT? TWO WOMEN REVOLUTIONARIES ON THE RUN... BEAUTIFUL, SEXY, VIOLENT... YET ULTIMATELY VULNERABLE.
YES. EXOTIC LOCALES. LONG SHOTS OF THEM GAMBOLING THRU SWAY RICE PADDIES
REAL, INTIMATE DIALOGUE OVER HASTILY BUILT CAMPFIRES
WOMEN TALKING TOGETHER THE WAY WOMEN REALLY TALK.
SO... WHO DO YOU SEE IN THE STARRING ROLES?
WHO ELSE? PACINO AND DE NIRO.
©1979 NICOLE HOLOFCENER

INCITING TO RIOT

USA, 1969, 35 mins. Black and White Video.

Producers and Directors: Steven Fischler, Joel Sucher and Howard Blatt. Producers: Pacific Street Film Projects.

Part fiction and part documentary this film documents the rise and fall of a radical anarchist group 'The Transcendental Students' at a major North American University. Because of its political activities the group is subjected to intensive government investigation intended not only to infiltrate, but also to harass and destroy the group. In hindsight we can laugh . . . but they thought the "revolution" was just around the corner.

Distribution: Cinema Guild (New York).

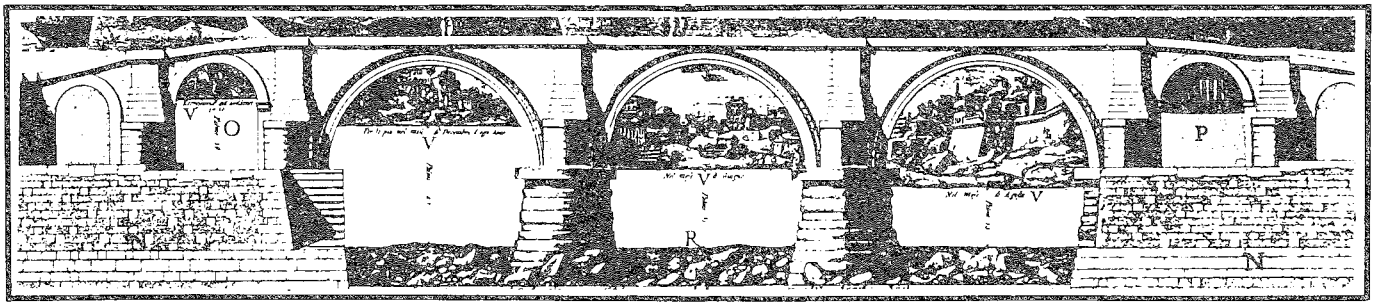
MEETING WITH THE ENEMY

USA, 1983, 24 mins. Black & White Video

Director: Niccolo Calderoni

A surreal exploration of a possible scenario for anarchist revolution and state counter-revolution. Did the anarchists really think that the KGB and the CIA would hand over North America to them?

Print from: Anarchist Film Archive (Melbourne).



LIBERA, AMORE MIO (LIBERTY MY LOVE)

ITALY, 1973, 110 mins. Colour.

Director: Mauro Bolognini. Producer: Roberto Loyola. Cinematographer, Screenplay: Luciano Vincenzoni, Nicola Badalucco, Mauro Bolognini. Photography: Franco Di Giacomo. Art Director: Guido Josia. Editor: Nino Baragli. Music: Ennio Morricone.
Cast: Claudia Cardinale (Libera Valente), Adolfo Celi (Felice Valente), Phillipe Leroy (Chief Constable Testa), Bekim Fehmiu (Sandro Pggi), Bruno Cirino (Arturo Zanoni).

Libera, Amore Mio observes two decades of Italian fascism from the point of view of a working class woman implacably opposed to totalitarianism in any form. The basis of the story is the life of the mother of co-writer Luciano Vincenzoni.

Libera absorbs the strong anarchist sympathies of her father when he is sent to exile on a prison island. Refusing to remain silent in the face of rising fascism she too is arrested and confined to the island. Later she joins the partisans during the war. Her struggle for freedom continues.

Print from: The Federation of Victorian Film Societies.

PROPERTY

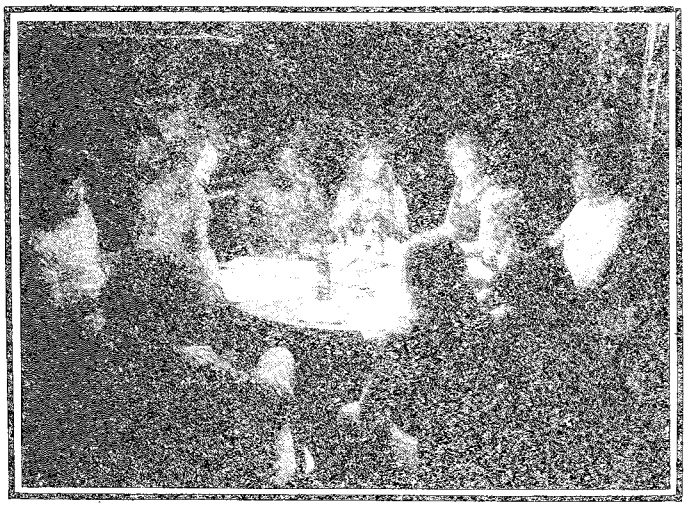
USA, 1978, 89 mins. Colour.

Producer, Director and Writer: Penny Allen. Lighting and Photography: Eric Edwards. Production Design: Henk Pander. Production Assistant: Cheryl Allen. Sound Recordist: Gus Van Sant. Sound Mix: Rick Johnson. Music: Richard Tyler.
Cast: Walter Curtis, Lola Desmond, Corky Hubbert, M.G. Horowitz, Nathaniel Haynes, Karen Irwin et al.

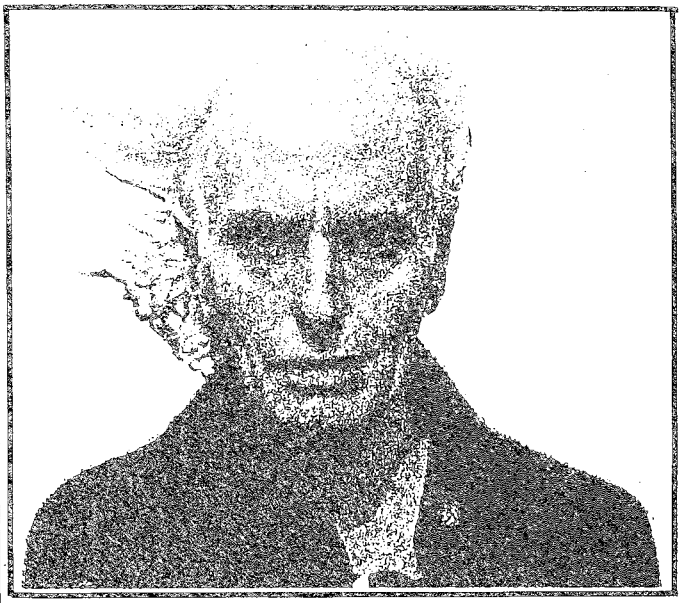
A light-hearted film that celebrates the exuberance of a non-conformist group from the Sixties caught in the world of Seventies corporate America. *Property* combines fact and fiction as real characters act out events close to their own lives.

When a real estate agency decides to sell its "properties" the tenants, faced with eviction and homelessness, decide to fight to save their homes. The irony of the situation is that people who have lived their lives in opposition to the "American Dream" are faced with accepting one of its most sacred cows: property. But buying back their homes may be the only way.

Distribution: First Run Features (New York)
Print kindly made available by Penny Allen and Jane Howard of First Run Features.



Property — challenging the "American Dream"



SIGNALS THROUGH THE FLAMES — The Story of the Living Theatre

USA, 1983, 97 mins. Colour.

Producers, Directors and Editors: Sheldon Rochlin and Maxine Harris. Co-Producer: Rachel McPherson. Photography: Sheldon Rochlin. Sound: Maxine Harris. Interviews: Mark Hall Amitin. Music: Carlo Altomare. Consultant: Ben Barenholtz. Cast: Judith Malina, Julian Beck and the Living Theatre Company.

Signals Through the Flames is the odyssey of the Living Theatre who for thirty-five years have occupied the stages and jails of the world, from Broadway to Brazil. This documentary traces their performances, their confrontations with civil authorities and their lifelong commitment to a revolutionary art in which politics and theatre are inseparable.

Distribution: Mystic Fire Video (New York).
Print kindly made available by Mr. Sheldon Rochlin.

SIGNALS THROUGH THE FLAMES — THE LIVING THEATRE

The Living Theatre founded in 1947 by Julian Beck and Judith Malina has a real claim to be called the nucleus of all avant-garde theatrical activity. "Signals Through The Flames" presented at this festival gives a firm introduction to the work and achievements of the Living Theatre. The documentary follows the nomadic movements of the Becks around the world after they went into self-imposed exile following the closing of their New York Theatre by the "tax men" in 1964. *Signals Through The Flames* is only one film of four that traces the development of the Living Theatre and their impact on the international theatre scene.

Having established their own theatre space in 1957 with the help of John Cage and Merce Cunningham the Becks embarked upon a programme of activity including poetry readings, experimental films, modern dance and music, benefits for artists and non-violent protest action against war, nuclear testing and the regulations and systems they saw as oppressive. In 1961 they created the first world wide *General Strike for Peace*.

Using the principles of French writer Antonin Artaud, who urged, in Beck's words, a "theatre of cruelty that works therapeutically by gripping the spectator in the guts and making him (her) feel

Julian Beck and Judith Malina in *Signals Through the Flames*

something" the Living Theatre received international attention with their performance, in 1959, of Jack Gelber's *The Connection* a startling play focusing upon heroin addicts.

The play was shocking in its use of strong language, its frank depiction of drug use, its use of the house and lobby as acting areas, and in its low-key but ruthlessly real acting style. *The Connection* caused controversy, won awards and the Becks were suddenly famous. In 1963, during a performance of *The Brig*, a masterpiece of cruelty and precision which starkly documented a day in a US Marine Prison Compound the U.S. Internal Revenue Service seized the theatre, charging the Becks with non-payment of taxes. The directors of the Living Theatre conducted their own defense in a front-page Federal trial which they transformed into a forum on art and politics. Both Judith and Julian were jailed; not, however, for tax evasion but for contempt of court.

The Living Theatre, now a 'cause celebre' moved to Europe and in the years of exile that followed they conceived and mounted four historic new productions: *Mysteries*, *Antigone*, *Frankenstein* and *Paradise Now* which they toured on the Continent and then in the late 60's throughout the United States. *Newsweek* described them as the 'Most coherent, concentrated and radically effective company in the world'.

In 1970 they gave their last performance of *Paradise Now* before a crowd of 7,000 at the Berlin Sportpalast. With offers to perform coming in from all over the world they chose to make good the last lines of *Paradise Now* — "The theatre is in the street. Free the Theatre. Free the Street".

During the next four years the Becks and a dozen members of the company took their theatre into the streets refusing to perform in conventional halls that charged admission. They went to Brazil, living in the shantytowns in the hills of Rio, working with the poor to create a politically-oriented street theatre, until they were arrested, jailed for more than two months and eventually deported to the United States.

Following street threatre experiments in the slums of Pittsburgh and theatre workshops for students they once aain, in 1975, returned to Europe and established a base in Rome. They performed at first only in factories, shopyards, mental hospitals and other public places.

After 20 years of self-exile in Europe Julian and Judith returned to the United States in 1984. A season at the Joyce Theatre in New York followed. An accomplished author and painter Julian died, at the age of 60 last year. The Living Theatre continues under the direction of Judith Malina and Hanon Reznikov.

"I think if we will look at this work as it really is we will find that even what is most ugly has within it the sparks of life. And I think we go to the theatre to glimpse those sparks. That's why we get so excited before we go to the theatre. It's because we're looking for light in a very dark world."

(Julian Beck, 1965)

DE TODA LA VIDA (. . . ALL OUR LIVES)

SPAIN/USA, 1986, 30 mins. Colour Video.

Producers and Directors: Lisa Berger and Carol Mazer.

All Our Lives (due for release March 1986) documents the lives of five women who actively participated in the social revolution in Spain during the Civil War in the 1930's. Shot on location in Toulouse and Bexiers, France and in Barcelona, Spain the video brings to life their vision of self-management as they worked to educate themselves, to create alternative institutions and new social relations like the 'union libre' (free union) which replaced marriage based upon economic dependence.

In the words of Suceso Portales, organiser with 'Mujeres Libres' (Free Women), the first independent working womens organisation in Spain "We weren't fighting a war in the ordinary sense of one major power against another, we were fighting to create a more just and humane society".

Distribution: Turning Tide Productions (Massachusettes).

Hortensia Torres and Dolores Prat speak about the Spanish revolution in *De Toda La Vida (All our Lives)*

ALL OUR LIVES

(By Martha Ackelsberg)

COMMUNITY AND THE EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN: LESSONS FROM MUJERES LIBRES

Do you live in a town where women are relegated to a position of insignificance, dedicated exclusively to housework and the care of children? No doubt, many times you have thought about this with some disgust, and when you've noticed the freedom which your brothers, or the men of your households, enjoy, you have felt the hardship of being a woman . . .

Well, against all this which you have had to suffer comes Mujeres Libres. We want you to have the same freedom as your brothers . . . we want your voice to be heard with the same authority as your father's. We want you to attain — without worrying about what people will say — that independent life you have wanted.

But, realize, that all this requires your effort; that these things don't come for nothing; and that, in order to achieve them, you need the assistance of others. You need others to be concerned with the same things as you, you need to help them, as they will help you. In a single word, you must struggle communally; which is the same as saying; you must create a Group (Agrupacion) of women.

This passage comes from a pamphlet entitled, *How to Organize a Mujeres Libres Group*, written in Spain, probably in 1937.

Mujeres Libres was founded by women who were activists within the Spanish anarcho-syndicalist movement. Between April 1936 and February 1939 they built an organization which claimed over 20,000 members (overwhelmingly, working-class women), in 147 groups throughout Republican Spain. Their goal was to *empower* working women. They had come to believe, through their own and others' experiences in the anarcho-syndicalist movement, that women's empowerment required a separate organization, one which would address what they called "women's triple enslavement: to ignorance, to capital, and to men."

Unlike most socialist movements, which treat *economic issues* (i.e., class relations) as the most basic form of subordination, on which all others depend, anarchists saw *hierarchy*, formalized authority, as the crucial problem. Within that theoretical framework, there was a place to treat various types of subordination (e.g. political and sexual as well as economic) as more or less in-

dependent relationships, each of which would need to be addressed by a truly revolutionary movement. And, as early as 1872, in fact, they set the overcoming of women's subordination as a goal of the movement.

Nevertheless, despite this openess on the theoretical level, women's oppression had never been given a high priority within the Spanish anarchist movement. Most anarchists refused to recognize the specificity of women's subordination; they assumed — if they were concerned at all — that women's emancipation would follow either from their incorporation into the paid labor force or (more commonly) simply from the establishment of an anarchist society. At best, they insisted that the struggle to overcome women's subordination must take place within and through movement organizations. As one woman activist stated,

> We are engaged in the work of creating a new society, and that work must be done in unison. We should be engaged in union struggles, along with men, fighting for our places, *demanding* to be taken seriously.[2]

But the women of Mujeres Libres insisted that more direct action was necessary. In their view, although anarchist men may have "talked a good line" while out on the speakers' platforms, most did not change their behavior toward women on a day-to-day basis. "It's true that we have struggled together," one woman recalled saying to her male comrades, "but you are always the leaders, and we are always the followers. Whether in the streets or at home. We are little better than slaves!" Mujeres Libres aimed both to overcome the barriers of ignorance and inexperience which prevented women from participating as equals in the struggle for a better society, and to confront the dominance of men within the anarchist movement itself. As Soledad Estorach, an "initiator" of the Barcelona group, told me:

> In Cataluña, at least, the dominant position was that men and women should both be involved. But the problem was that the men *didn't know how* to get women involved as activists. They continued (both men and most women) to think of women as assistants, accepted in a secondary status. For them, I think, the ideal situation would be to have a *compañera* who did not oppose their ideas, but in whose private life would be more or less like other women. *They* wanted to be activists 24 hours a day — and in that context, of course, it's impossible to have equality. . . . Men got so involved that the women were left behind, almost of necessity. Especially, for example, when he would be taken to jail. Then she would have to take care of the children, work to support the family, visit him in jail, etc. That, the *compañeras* were very good at! But for us, that was not enough. That is not activism![3]

When the women of Mujeres Libres talked about their aims, they used a word, *capacitación*, that has no exact English equivalent. "Empowerment" is probably the closest we can get. For them, as for anarchists in general, changing people's consciousness of themselves and their places in society is a crucial step toward revolutionary change.

Yet the hard question, of course — for Mujeres Libres as for any social revolutionary movement — is how does that change in consciousness take place?

Although Mujeres Libres was an organization of women, which had as its purpose the empowerment of women, it was firmly rooted in the Spanish anarchist movement. In order to understand its program and strategy, we must take a few moments to locate it in that larger Spanish context.

One of the defining characteristics of the "communalist-anarchist tradition" (by which I mean the tradition of Bakunin, Kropotkin, and Malatesta, on which the Spanish anarchist movement drew) is the insistence that means must be consistent with ends. If the goal of revolutionary struggle is a non-hierarchical, egalitarian society, then it must be created through the activities of a non-hierarchical movement. Otherwise, participants will never be empowered to act independently, and those who direct the "movement" will end up as "directors" of the post-revolutionary society.

Crucial to their ability to imagine such non-authoritarian order was their insistence that individuality and community are not incompatible but, rather, mutually related. The social world they envision is not one of isolated individuals. Nor is it the moral and social chaos so often associated with the word "anarchism." Rather, it is a world in which orderly human relationships are central, but order is assured via cooperation, rather than through competition or hierarchy.

Spanish anarchists and anarcho-syndicalists reflected this perspective in their commitment to decentralism and to a strategy of "direct action." Direct action means that revolutionary activity and organization begin "where people are," not through "intermediaries" such as political parties. Those local activities are then coordinated either through "propaganda by the deed," exemplary action which brings adherents by the power of the positive example it sets, or by "spontaneous organization," non-coercive federations of local groups. The point, here, was to achieve *order without coercion*. This Spanish anarchists accomplished through what we might call "federative networking."

Under the general aegis of the movement were trade unions, affinity groups, storefront schools, cultural centers, etc. But none of these groups could claim to speak — or act — for others. They were more "forums for discussion" than directive organizations.[4]

Finally, Spanish anarchists believed that direct action takes place only within a context of "preparation"; "spontaneous order" emerges only from processes that empower people. "Preparation" was the key to the success of a strategy of direct action. While they rejected the role of a party in laying down a blueprint for the revolution, Spanish anarchists also denied that fundamental social change could take place in a vaccuum. People needed to develop confidence in themselves and in their comprehension of the world. But such preparation, if it was not to take a hierarchical form, could take place only through people's experience of new and different forms of social organization.

The anarcho-syndicalist trade union movement (CNT) had been developing for close to seventy years by the time the Civil War officially began in July, 1936. Non-hierarchically structured union organizations, growing up in both rural and urban/industrial Spain, served as arenas within which workers could develop a sense of their ability — when united with others — to take control of their work, and of their lives. And unions drew on, while also nurturing, age-old traditions of collective action. Whether in nineteenth-century declarations of "comunismo libertario" in rural Andalusia, or in twentieth-century antiwar demonstrations and "bread riots" in Barcelona, thousands of men and women throughout Spain had had experiences of "direct action." They had taken to the streets to demand that their needs be met and, more to the point, had sometimes used their power directly, as in "liberating" meat markets and stores of coal.

Rationalist schools and *ateneos* provided yet other contexts for "preparation." These schools, which grew up in many working-class barrios in Barcelona during the early 1930s, were supported by local unions, and staffed by a few dedicated teachers who had managed to get some training in an educational system otherwise totally dominated by the Church. They were models of participatory education, non-hierarchically organied, which attacked illiteracy and built self-confidence and class consciousness at the same time. The cultural centers which usually operated out of the same building provided much-needed recreational opportunities — but always with a message. Trips to the mountains or the seashore, for example, were always accompanied by *charlas*. As one woman said of her experiences with the group, "ideas got stirred up, they created a sense of being *compañeros* and *compañeras*.... That's where we were formed, most deeply, ideologically."[5] Most *ateneos* had libraries, as well — which opened the doors for many young people who had no other access to books: "When I saw the library at the *ateneo*, I thought all the world's knowledge was at my fingertips."[6]

Thus, by the time of the Civil War, there was already an extensive network of anarchist and anarcho-syndicalist organizations and activities, especially in Cataluña, Aragon, and the Levant. What is less well-known is that the Spanish Civil War was not simply a war of "democracy" against "fascism." Within the territory "controlled" by forces local to the Republic, a social revolution took place. Somewhere between 7 and 8 million people are estimated to have taken part in collectivizations of rural or industrial properties. The anarchists were among the groups most central to these efforts. Mujeres Libres was to operate in that larger revolutionary context — its 147 local groups were clustered in areas that were also major centers of the anarcho-syndicalist movement (in Madrid, Cataluña, the Levant, and Aragon).

Of the various "preparatory" activities I described, the schools and cultural centers, in particular, were especially important to women. Spanish society at the time was extremely sex-divided. Most men and women kept to a society almost exclusively of their own sex. Beyond that, the subordination of women — both economic and cultural — was much more severe than that of men. Rates of illiteracy were higher among women than among men. Those women who did work for wages outside the home (predominantly unmarried women), were relegated to the lowest-paid jobs in the most oppressive work conditions. But these educational centers and youth organizations were sex-integrated, and they provided young women as well as young men an opportunity to enrich themselves culturally and to meet people of the opposite sex as equals. Finally, they could speak to the needs and experiences of women — and of unorganized workers — as unions could not, since they operated in an arena much broader than that of the workplace. Not surprisingly, virtually all the women with whom I spoke reported that their experiences in the *ateneos* and youth organizations were essential to their own development, and a critical component of their "preparation" for Mujeres Libres. Some women, then, did find a place for themselves within the community provided by the anarcho-syndicalist movement and, in particular, by its youth organizations. But many also recognized the limitations of those groups. On the one hand, as women, they were not always treated with the seriousness, respect, and

equality they felt they (and all women) deserved. And, on the other (and I think this weighed even more heavily for many of the founders, since they were so committed to the anarchist movement and its project), they were all too aware of the inability of the anarcho-syndicalist movement to attract many competent women to its ranks, let alone to move them into positions of leadership. They attributed that failing both to the sexism of the men and to the "lack of preparation" of sufficient numbers of women.

Many of the activists were young (though, of course, it should also be mentioned that it is the ones who were young in 1935-36 who are most likely to be alive now to tell their stories!) and unmarried. While many of them (as most working-class girls) had begun work somewhere between the ages of 8 and 12, their unmarried (and, more significantly, perhaps, childless) status allowed them a certain amount of time to engage in movement-related activities.

Enriqueta Rovira, for example, is one of seven children of a dedicated anarchist couple, and the granddaughter of Abelardo Saavedra, one of the early anarchist travelling teachers who had been forced to leave the country at the turn of the century for having committed the crime of teaching field hands in Andalucia (rural Southern Spain) how to read. She cannot even describe how she "became" an anarchist — the ideas were there from the beginning. "These ideas came to us without any imposition.... It's almost as if she [our mother] didn't *teach* them, we *lived* them, were born with them. We learned them as you would learn to sew, or to eat." Even for Enriqueta — who came from a family which not only shared, but had nurtured, her beliefs — the association with others in an ateneo was crucial. It provided her with a strong sense of community which lasted over time: friendships she established there provided entree for her to do important work during the years of the Civil War.

Soledad Estorach's father — a teacher, and a republican — had imbued her with a love of learning (and taught her to read — no small feat for a young woman in those years) before he died when she was ten. By age fourteen, she left home — to avoid a marriage that would have "confined me to inside the four walls of a house." She went to Barcelona to find work which would enable her to support herself and her mother and sister. There she eventually joined a union, and became involved in an ateneo which, as she reported, opened a whole new world to her: "It was an incredible life, the life of a young militant. A life dedicated to struggle, to knowledge, to remaking society. It was characterized by a kind of effervescence, a constant activity."[8]

What all these women had in common was that all of them had been involved either in union activities or, more commonly, in ateneos and/or youth organizations. These experiences energized them with the vision of a new way to live and to interact with others. The networks created there provided important ongoing support which was both emotional and material: many women made life-long friends whose mutual support was essential during those times when (in the words of Soledad) "it seemed we lived on air alone." Pepita Carpeña, for example, received a small stipend from the metalworkers union (where she had many friends) so she could do her organizing work full-time for Mujeres Libres.

Others — particularly the Madrid founders — were older. And some of the activists were married with children. Pilar Grangel was in her late thirties when the War broke out, and had been the co-director (with her compañero) of what we would call an "alternative school." When she heard about Mujeres Libres, she began to work with them, offering classes in teacher training (as well as in basic literacy, etc. for adult women) to try to further the work she and her compañero had started on their own. Lola Iturbe was already thirty-four. She had started work at age nine and a half, and been introduced to anarchist ideas when she was about fifteen. Together with her compañero, she worked on the anarchist newspaper *Tierra y Libertad* and participated in Mujeres Libres as something of a "cultural worker."

Mercedes Comaposada illustrates yet another route to activism. She was the daughter of a socialist father, and had little or no contact with the anarchist movement — or its ideas — until she was a law student in Madrid. Then, in 1933, a friend asked her to give some basic education classes at a CNT union's center, which she gladly agreed to do. As she reported, "They wanted me to teach....But it was impossible, because of the attitudes of some 'compañeros.' They didn't take women seriously. They thought all women needed to do was cook and sew....Women barely dared to speak in that context."[9] From that moment, she — and Lucía Sanchez Saornil (who, together with her and Amparo Poch, a physician, was to found Mujeres Libres) — came to an immediate understanding:

> We had one million people against us. The great revolutionaries — Clara Zetkin, Alexandra Kollontai, Rosa Luxemburg — all tried to do something with women. But they all found out that, from within a party, within an existing revolutionary organization, it's impossible. I remember reading, for example, of a letter from Lenin to Clara Zetkin in which he says to her, "Yes, all this you're talking about the emancipation of women is very good. A very

fine goal. But for later." The interests of a party *always* come before those of women.[10]

So, beginning late in 1933, they sent out letters to women throughout the country — both in the CNT and outside — announcing that they were thinking of starting an organization for women, and asking people to respond with issues they would like to see addressed. "Our great joy," Mercedes told me, "was the response: they were incredibly enthusiastic, and there were always more."[11]

Meanwhile, in Barcelona, other women were having similar experiences, and developing similar responses. Soledad Estorach, who was one of the initiators of that group, described its beginnings:

> Mujeres Libres (or what was to be Mujeres Libres) began to form in Cataluña starting in around 1934, building on the experiences that many of us militants had had with activism in mixed groups. Women would come once, to a Sunday excursion, perhaps, or to some discussion group — sometimes they would even join — but they'd never be seen again. In Barcelona, you know, the movement was very large and very strong.... And there were lots of women involved in some industries — textiles and dressmaking, in particular. But we noticed that, even in that union, there were few women who ever spoke. We became concerned about the women we were losing, and thought about creating a group to deal with these issues. We sent out a call to all women in the libertarian movement in 1935, and, with those who responded, we formed a group and called it "Grupo cultural feminino, CNT."[12]

Initially, these groups existed more or less under the auspices of the CNT. Their purpose was to develop more women as activists within the anarcho-syndicalist movement. But within a short time, they came to the conclusion that developing women activists was complex, and that they needed autonomy if they were to reach the women they wanted to reach, in the way they wanted to reach them.

Eventually, those in Barcelona heard about the group in Madrid, and, in September of 1936, they "joined forces" under the name that the Madrid group had chosen — "Mujeres Libres." Meanwhile, in April 1936, the Madrid group had published the first issue of the magazine of the same name; 13 issues were to appear by the time publication had to be stopped at the end of the War.

The founding of Mujeres Libres is a good example of "direct action," or "spontaneous organization." And it points out the rootedness of Mujeres Libres in the anarchist movement which so insisted on the need for *self*-organization to meet people's *self*-defined needs. Soledad captured well their own sense of what they were up to:

> There were, of course, people who said this was wrong, that we should work only in mixed groups, and that we were in danger of falling into "feminism."
>
> Now I — and most of us — had never heard of "feminism" before. I didn't know that there were groups of women out there in the world organizing for women's rights. There were one or two within our group who had heard of feminism — they had been to France. But I didn't know such things existed in the world! What I'm trying to say is that we were operating within our own situation, on the basis of our own experiences. We didn't import this from elsewhere. We hadn't even realized it existed![13]

(It's important to note here that they — and virtually all anarchists — had a very negative reaction to "feminism," which they identified with middle-class women's struggle for the vote and/or professional privileges. As an organization, primarily, of working-class women, dedicated to the emancipation of working-class women, they saw individualist feminism as irrelevant, if not contrary, to their entire project.)

The element of autonomy was crucial to them — it was what made possible that self-definition essential to empowerment. As Lucia Sanchez Saornil wrote in 1935, "I believe it is not the place of men to establish the role of women in society, however elevated that might be. The anarchist way, I repeat, is to let *the woman act on her own freedom, without either guides or enforcement;* to let her move in the direction that her inclinations and abilities direct."[14]

Or, as Enriqueta Rovira says she used to try to explain,

> I used to say to the compañeros, "We don't want to be free to take away your jobs, or to take your spades or your hammers, or the bread from your arms. We want to be free to reclaim our rights. Who gives you the right to have four or five women, when we have to make do with one [man], even if we have desires for other things. Why do we have to limit ourselves to being cleaners, when we have the ability to be a secretary, or a director, or...who knows what? No, this is what you have to realize about women: that women ... are capable of everything. Equality is everything."[15]

They aimed to provide a context within which women could overcome their subordination and develop a new consciousness of themselves. Mujeres Libres's *programs* addressed problems of particular concern to women — those which,

according to their analysis, constituted the main components of women's subordination — i.e. illiteracy, economic dependence and exploitation, and ignorance about health care, child care, and sexuality. Meanwhile, the *structure* of the organization — namely its autonomy from existing male-dominated organizations — was designed to build up, and protect, that newly developing sense of self.

While they did not officially set priorities among what they saw as the sources of women's subordination, most of the organization's activities focused on overcoming ignorance and economic exploitation. They mounted a massive literacy drive to provide the foundation necessary for an "enculturation of women," with classes given in towns and villages wherever they had organizations. In addition, they set up major centers in the cities where they were strongest — "Mujeres Libres Institutes" in Madrid and Valencia, and the "Casal de la Dona Treballadora" (Institute for Working Women) in Barcelona — which offered elementary literacy classes; more advanced classes in languages, typing, stenography; "professional courses" such as nursing, childcare, craft skills (electricity, mechanics, etc.) education, and health care; and courses in what they termed *formacion social:* union organization, economics, and general weekly meetings which provided opportunities to meet and talk with other women (paving the way for political activism). They saw literacy as a tool to develop women's self-confidence as well as to facilitate their full participation in society and social change: "It was almost like a school for activists.... We didn't exactly indoctrinate people, but we did more than just technical training.... We encouraged them to pay attention, to become activists."[16]

Mujeres Libres saw women's economic dependence as rooted in an extreme sexual division of labor, which assigned women the lowest-paid work under the most oppressive conditions. To overcome it, they worked closely with CNT unions, sponsoring training and apprenticeship programs in many factories. As Mercedes Comaposada described them, these programs had multiple functions. "The work section was probably the most important. We started in that arena immediately, because it was essential to get women out of the house.

The organization, as a whole, had no clear position on the cultural subordination of women. Some of its members (including Ampara Poch and Lucia Sanchez Saornil, two of the founders) strongly criticized "bourgeois morality" (and, particularly, notions of marriage and monogamy) which, they said, subordinated women and limited everyone's potential for relationships. They argued against the definition of women solely as mothers. "We wanted to make clear that the woman is an individual and she has value and worth even apart from being a mother. We wanted to get rid of the myth of 'THE MOTHER.' At the very least, we wanted *madres conscientes* [mothers by choice]. People should be able to choose whether, when, and how to have children."[16] But most members were probably committed to the ideal of monogamous relationships, even if not to legal marriage. And, with rare exceptions, the ideal of "free love" (even in the sense that people should be free to enter and leave monogamous relationships when they pleased, not according to church- or society-related criteria, seemed to apply more to men than to women.

There was greater agreement on other aspects of cultural subordination. One of Mujeres Libres's most innovative goals (though one they barely were able to put into practice because of the demands of the War) was the creation of *liberatorios de prostitución*, centers where former prostitutes could go and be supported while they retrained for better lives.

Another major focus was health care. Up until the outbreak of the War, the Church had undertaken the provision of whatever health care was available in Spain. Mujeres Libres trained nurses to replace the nuns, and developed educational and hygiene programs for maternity hospitals and neighborhood centers. These aimed to overcome women's ignorance (perpetuated by the Church) about their bodies and their sexuality — an ignorance which Mujeres Libres saw as another root of women's subordination to men.

It is important to note that its program and organization were quite different from those of other women's organizations in Spain at the time, most of which were the "women's auxiliary" of various party organizations. Mujeres Libres constantly reminded members, "In the midst of all the sacrifices...we are working to find ourselves, and to situate ourselves in an atmosphere which, until now, has been denied to us: social action."[18] In an important parallel to the anarchist movement's position about social revolution, they argued that women's emancipation need not await the end of the war, and that women could best help both themselves and the war effort by insisting on their equality and participating as fully as possible in the ongoing struggle.

Consciousness raising was an essential aspect of their program, and the organization lost few opportunities to engage women in the process. They set up talks and discussion groups, to let women get used to hearing the sound of their own voices in public. What they called *preparacion social* became an element of every project they undertook. In cooperation with unions, for example, groups of women from Mujeres

Libres visited women working in factories, ostensibly to get them more involved in union activity. In groups of two or three, Mujeres Libres' "organizers" would visit up to fifty factories a day, stopping the assembly lines for fifteen minutes or so to talk with the workers. While they were there, they gave little "pep talks" to the women about the significance of their participation *as women*. In some areas (e.g. Terrassa), they arranged for women unionists to meet independently of men, both so that they could talk about issues of particular concern to them, and so that they could support one another to participate more actively in the union meeting. In Barcelona, the group set up "flying daycare centers," to provide in-home child care for women to enable them to attend union meetings.

Conclusions

Clearly, the women of Mujeres Libres drew not only on their own experiences within the anarcho-syndicalist movement, but also on the perspectives on society and social change which animated it. Their goal of empowering women through participation in groups which responded to the specific realities of their day-to-day lives followed directly from the anarchist commitment to direct action. Neither individual male anarchists nor the major organizations of the Spanish anarchist movement were necessarily as enthusiastic about (or even supportive of) their programs and accomplishments as Mujeres Libres might have wished. Nevertheless, they attempted to put into practive an orientation toward social and political life to which anarchists had long been committed, at least in theory: a respect for diversity.

PROSTITUTION AND THE REVOLUTION

Low, M. 1979 Red Spanish Notebook, City Lights Books, San Francisco.

In *Red Spanish Notebook*, the Australian writer Mary Low describes the impact of *Free Women's* campaign against prostitution: I was riding in the (street-car) down the Ramblas the first time I saw (Free Women's) poster against prostitution. It was the first time I had seen the matter raised. I felt very pleased at this new sight.

The poster was huge and covered a whole (wall). Everyone was looking at it.

A group of anarchists from the militias, the young beards fresh on their faces, were standing round me on the rattling front of the tram. When they saw it they were disturbed.

"Finish with prostitution," read one of them. "What do you think of that?"

They stood around uneasily, obviously annoyed, and awkward at finding themselves annoyed.

"Our women, too. They don't mind getting their hands in, do they?"

"Nothing to do with them. They're free, aren't they?"

"Well, what's a man going to do if they start really suppressing it? It's not as though they were so on-coming themselves that we could do without it."

At night the narrow streets in the prostitute quarter swarmed with militias back from the front.

"Well, what can you do?" people answered me with a shrug. "You can stop it growing, or beginning again, but what can you do with those women who are there already? How can you change them?"

"They might go to work in the factories. Or nurse. Or they might go to the front."

"They did go to the front at first. But being hardened by prostitution doesn't necessarily make one cool under fire. A lot of them were in the way, and then the men were always being sent home with venereal (disease) because there was no control."

In the end, the prostitutes began to look after their own interests. A little time had elapsed before they began thinking of vindicating themselves. One day they realized that they also could be in the revolution.

Immediately they turned out the patrons to whom the houses belonged and occupied their "working premises." They proclaimed their equality. After a number of stormy debates, they formed a trade union and presented a petition for affiliaton to the CNT.

All profits were equally shared. Henceforth, instead of the usual former picture of the "Sacred Heart," a framed notice was hung up in every brothel announcing: "You are requested to treat the women as comrades. By order of the Committee."

The women of Mujeres Libres were thoroughly rooted in anarchism and in the goals and strategies of the Spanish anarcho-syndicalist movement. Yet, in insisting on the need for *separate* organization, they apparently moved beyond the bounds of where the movement, as such, was willing to go. While their own accomplishments may have been limited — most dramatically because of the wartime situation in which they were operating — their programs suggest a vision of the relationship between individuality and community from which there is much we can learn.

Consciousness raising is essentially a process of empowerment. Recognizing that others share concerns and difficulties which we assume to be "personal" is an important first step toward the development of a "political" consciousness — a sense that our lives are socially constructed and that the world can be changed. So, although it takes place in the person of individuals, consciousness raising is, fundamentally, a collective endeavor. Its success is rooted in — and, in fact, helps to create and cement — a sense of community. And it is that sense of community which, in turn, empowers its participants.

That insight is an important one — but one which has often been lost in the claims that feminism is about "personal advancement" or "equal opportunity." The classical liberal perspective (to which those of us who are citizens of the US are heir), is that community and individuality are necessarily at odds. More accurate, I think, is the perspective from which Mujeres Libres acted: that people achieve their full personhood not in conflict with, but in the context of, a community — but one which, of course, values and respects them.

Let's look at that in a bit more detail. As citizens of "liberal democratic politics," in particular, many of us tend to equate "community" with sameness. Hence, the common assumption (often leveled against anarchists or other egalitarians) that community is incompatible with creativity and individuality (because creativity is stifled by it). That claim is the source, I think, of some significant problems in American politics, feminist or other. For we seem to operate on the assumption that truly democratic politics, respectful of individuality, is rooted in *contract* and based on *interests* — interests which inhere in us as individuals, divorced from any race, class, or cultural connections. Much of liberal democratic politics seems based on the assumption that organizing around *differences* (especially those based in race, class, gender, or culture) undermines the unity of the whole.

As members of non-dominant groups in the US have been pointing out for some time, however — most recently, within the context of the women's movement — such an approach to politics (and personhood) in fact *disempowers* people, and can well serve to *deny* our individuality. We are coming to see, for example, that there is probably no such thing as "woman" — each of us is rooted in the particular cultural, ethnic, religious, etc. communities in which she grew up and to which she is, to some extent, connected. To ask of one another that we discard those identities (and the connections in which they are rooted) in the name of some abstract "womanhood" is to deny the richness of our particular lives — in much the same way that men's reticence to acknowledge women's particular experience in the name of "humanity" denies us the fullness of our personhood and history.

We need to begin to think about "community" in other ways — which explode its alleged incompatibility with personal development. And here is where I think anarchist notions can be of some help. First, there are, surely, aspects of ourselves which we can realize *only* in relationships with others — and some of these *require* networks of others, i.e. community. We must begin to see communities not just as a

Mujeres Libres magazine

means to allow each of us to pursue our self-defined ends, but as the *contexts* within which we realize, and express, the fullness of who we are. Conversely, since virtually all of us will have roots in more than one of these contexts, any community which is to nurture our wholeness must not only recognize, but actively welcome, diversity into its very definition.

What I find so appealing about the women of Mujeres Libres is that, in some way, they were struggling with these same issues. With all their commitment to the goals of the anarchist movement — and their rootedness in its community — they recognized that something was missing for them, as women. That was a painful realization for most of them. Some of those who were to become activists even opposed the idea of a separate organization when they first heard about it, because the anarcho-syndicalist movement in which they had been nurtured was so important to them that they feared anything which might undermine its unity. Yet, over time, each of those women came to insist that, both for the sake of her own and other women's development (as persons and as anarchists) and, in fact, for the sake of the movement, itself, a separate organization, devoted to women's emancipation, was essential.

Their experience can, perhaps, point us toward a different way of thinking about our reality. In their view, women could be empowered — and active — in the anarchist movement only if they could *at the same time* acknowledge and build on their ties of common experience with other women. Although many men in the anarchist movement saw their program as *divisive* of unity, these women most certainly did not. Rather, they seemed to insist, it is not only the acceptance, but the *nurturing* of such ties *within the context of the larger movement* which, ultimately, makes possible an empowered unity.

Mujeres Libres had little time to turn its visions into reality, so we cannot know how much they might have accomplished. Nor, so far as I can tell, did they have a clear formula for how to make it all work. But their own organization was a federation of autonomous local groups; and the relationship they *wanted* (but could not have) with the larger anarchist movement was also that of an autonomous set of units operating within the larger, federated, whole. Perhaps that model (and a sense of anarchist commitments to direct action and spontaneous organization) can provide us with some clues.

I think there is much we can learn from their efforts — from their recognition that, if we are truly to respect and nurture individuality, we must provide not only "small communities" to empower, but larger communities which respect and welcome that diversity (and the diversity embodied in each of us). Rather than assuming that we must sacrifice the full development of our personhood for the good of the community, or sacrifice the rewards of community life and action for individual ends, we can begin to imagine — and strive for — a world where creativity is nurtured through connection, and communities can truly empower their members.

Footnotes

1. El Comité Nacional, Mujeres Libres, "Como organizar una agrupación Mujeres Libres," (Publicaciones Mujeres Libres), cited in Mary Nash, ed., *"Mujeres Libres" España, 1936-1939* (Barcelona: Tusquets Editor, 1976), p.76.
2. Igualdad Ocaña, interview, Hospitalet, February 14, 1979.
3. Soledad Estorach, interview, Paris, January 6, 1982.
4. See, for example, Temma Kaplan, *Anarchists of Andalusia* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978), pp. 206-207.
5. Enriqueta Rovira, interview, Castelnaudary, France, December 29, 1981.
6. Soledad Estorach, interview, Paris, January 4, 1982.
7. Interview, December 28, 1981.
8. Interview, January 4 and 6, 1982.
9. Mercedes Comaposada, interview, Paris, January 5, 1982.
10. Interview, Paris, January 3, 1982.
11. Mercedes Comaposada, interview, January 5, 1982.
12. Soledad Estorach, interview, Paris, January 4, 1982.
13. Soledad, interview, Paris, January 4, 1982.
14. "Resumen al margen," cited in Nash, ed., *"Mujeres Libres,"* p. 64.
15. Enriqueta Rovira, interview, December 28, 1981.
16. Soledad Estorach, interview, Paris, January 4, 1982.
17. Interview, Paris, January 5, 1982.
18. Cited in Carmen Alcalde, *La mujer en la Guerra civil española* (Madrid: Editorial Cambio 16, n.d.), p. 154.

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WE AIM TO PLEASE

AUSTRALIA, 1976, 12 minutes. Colour.

Produced and Directed by: Robin Laurie and Margot Nash.

1.
Women have been depicted in quite a different way from men, not because the feminine is different from the masculine..
BUT BECAUSE
... THE IDEAL SPECTATOR IS ALWAYS ASSUMED TO BE MALE AND THE IMAGE OF WOMAN DESIGNED TO FLATTER HIM
HEY---- pssst!!
WHAT?
RUMBLE RUMBLE
DON'T MISTAKE A STAGE OF CAPITALIST DEVELOPMENT FOR A STATE OF PERMANENT TORTURE
RIP
SKRREEEE!!!
RATA-TAT-TAT!
WHROOM! WHROOM! WHROOM!
VROOOOM!
CLANG! CLANG!
NO I WONT! I WONT!
HURRAH
WELL--- AH--- IT'S AN ILL WIND THAT BLOWS NO MINDS
Mmmm... DELICIOUS!
CRITIC
CRITIC
WE AIM TO PLEASE

Print from: National Library of Australia.

WINSTANLEY

U.K. 1972, 96 mins. Black and White.

Directors: Kevin Brownlow and Andrew Mollo. Producer: British Film Institute. Script: Kevin Brownlow and Andrew Mollo based upon "Comrade Jacob" by David Caute. Photography: Ernest Vincze.

With meticulous attention to historical detail this beautiful film traces the attempt by the "Diggers" to form a communal settlement in Surrey, England in 1649. Led by Gerard Winstanley, an ex-soldier and cloth merchant, the Diggers struggled for the abolition of wage-labour and the establishment of individual freedom as a birthright. The film traces the harassment of their community by the local Parson and landowners threatened by this challenge to their control of the land.

Distribution: Quality Films.

THE WOBBLIES

USA, 1979, 89 mins. Colour.

Directors: Stewart Bird and Deborah Shaffer. Producer: Centre for Educational Productions. Photography: Sandi Sissel, Judy Irola, Peter Gessner and Bonnie Friedman. Music: Various artists including Peggy Seeger and Ewan MacColl. Research: Pierce Rafferty, Erika Gottfried, Peter Smallman.
Cast: The Wobblies — Irma Lombardi, Jack Miller, Angela Angelo Rocco, James Fair, Sophie Cohen, Roger Baldwin, Art Shields, Nicholas Steelink, Tom Scribner, Dominic Mignone, Nels Peterson, Katie Pintek.

A world with justice and equality for everyone; a job for everyone who wanted to work; adequate food, clothing, housing and education; the right to voice an opinion and take part in shaping one's destiny. Such were the demands of the Industrial Workers of the World, better known as the Wobblies.

At the time of the IWW's founding convention in 1905,

Winstanley

A world with justice and equality for everyone — *The Wobblies*

the only viable union that existed was the American Federation of Labour (nicknamed the American Separation of Labour by the Wobblies). The AFL existed to protect skilled workers, but there was no union for the foreign-born, women, children and blacks who had the unskilled and unsafe jobs. The IWW was formed to address itself to their needs. It stood for the organization of all workers into "One Big Union".

The filmmakers evoke the feeling of "being there" through their use of wonderful photographs, rare newsreels and propaganda cartoons. A vibrant soundtrack reveals the vitality of the movement and brings the past alive. The heart of the film, though, is in the interviews with the Wobblies themselves.

A retired textile worker recalls her curt rebuke to a cop who asked for a date and a man with an unruly shock of curly white hair gleefully recounts how the Wobblies infiltrated and sabotaged a trainload of scabs back in 1917. The eyes of an elderly Arizona woman still flash with anger as she describes how police arrested a thousand IWWers in pre-dawn raids, putting them in cattle cars and leaving them without water in the desert.

The Wobblies played an active role in the world's first auto stike at Studebaker in 1913; they helped Massachusetts textile workers defy mill owners and police to win their strike, and they participated in the shutdown of the Pacific Northwest's grim logging camps.

IWW members fought their battles with a unique combination of militancy and irreverence. They gave new meaning to the word "sabotage", defining it as the "conscious withdrawal of efficiency". Their songs parodied the "wait-and-pray" attitude of some religionists. When one of their speakers was arrested, another would jump onto the soap box until the jails were filled and the police frustrated.

But it was not all easy. The Wobblies' idealism and action were attacked by angry employers and the police. The filmmakers unearthed the kinds of anti-Wobbly material that eventually helped lead to the union's decline. In 1920, one Walt Disney animated film, a part of the Alice series, depics IWW-organized chickens on an egg-laying strike, led into this devious action by Little Red Henski. Another cartoon shows Uncle Sam watching over a pile of corn that represents American plenty. When an IWW Bolshevik rat jumps through the window to consume it all, Sam trounces it with a shovel and saves the goods. This message is brought to the public courtesy of Ford.

There was no way that any organization as scattered, as loosely structured and, in a way, naive, as the IWW, could withstand the various pressures, including the force of the FBI's large-scale round-ups. The organization of the IWW disintegrated by 1920, but ideas and ideals never deserted former Wobblies, as they eloquently and movingly tell us in the final scenes of the film.

Distribution: Quality Films.

WRITING ON THE WALL

FRANCE, 1982, 110 mins. Colour.

Director: Armand Gatti. Screenplay: Armand Gatti. Photography: Armand Marco, Ned Burgess, Jean-Pierre Dardenne. Music: Philippe Hermon-Tamie and the Demons.
Cast: Paddy Docherty, John Keegan, Desmond McAleer, Joseph B. Long, John Deehan.

In Laurence Hill, a street in Derry, Northern Ireland, 20 year old Edward Hobson, serving in the British Army, is killed by an anonymous bullet. WRITING ON THE WALL is a mystery story which analyses his death and those that follow in the conflict not only according to the terms of Inspector Bond, whose futuristic, anti-terrorist unit tries to aportion individual blame, but in terms of the community, and therefore, the language, culture and myth.

The truly remarkable aspect of this film and the work of film-maker Armand Gatti is that he has created an opportunity for the young people of Derry to act out their own history, in their own words and in their own terms. Together with the students and tutors of the Derry Youth and Community Workshop, he wrote the film over the summer of 1982.

Print kindly made available by Australian Film Commission.

ZERO DE CONDUITE (ZERO FOR CONDUCT)

FRANCE, 1933, 44 mins. Black and White

Director: Jean Vigo. Producer: Aqui-Film (Paris). Writer: Jean Vigo. Photography: Boris Kaufman. Editor: Jean Vigo. Music: Maurice Jaubert (with lyrics by Charles Goldblatt). Directors Assistants: Albert Riere, Henri Storgk and Pierre Merle.
Cast: Jean Daste, Robert Le Flon, Du Veron, Delphin, Louis Lefebvre.

Zero de Conduite, banned by the French Government until 1945, tells of the oppressive life in a french boarding school and the eventual revolt of its students. Its creator, Jean Vigo was one of film's most original and remarkable talents. In "Zero de Conduite" Vigo does not attempt to delineate between reality and fantasy; we see the world through the eyes of his school-boy characters . . .

Distribution: Cineaction.

THE ANARCHISM OF JEAN VIGO

Jean Vigo's *Zero de Conduite* and *L'Atlante*, the first banned by the French Government after its first showing in 1933, the second mutilated when it appeared in 1934, started a new life after the war and have left traces in every new movement in the post-war cinema.

The revival of Vigo's films in the fifties and sixties by the French "New Wave" directors ((Truffaut's first feature film included quotations from *Zero de Conduite* in homage to Vigo's influence) allows us to see his films in a new light. His work has been characterised as ". . . unblemished inspiration . . . (Zero) is one of the most visually eloquent and adventurous movies I have ever seen" (James Agee, *The Nation)* yet little is known of his own background. Constant references are made to his 'avant-guardism' and the 'anarchistic style' of his films but his clear links to anarchism and the anarchist movement, in a very conscious sense, have generally been unrecognised.

To understand Vigo's anarchism we must begin not with Vigo, but with his father. Miguel Almereyda (Eugene Bonaventura de Vigo) was born in the French Pyrenees in 1883. *His* father died of tuberculosis at the age of 20, and he was brought up by his grandparents. As a young man he left his country home for Paris where he eventually found work as a photographer's assistant. He frequented anarchist circles and soon attracted the attention of Police Commissioner Fourquet of the "Troiseieme Brigade".

Imprisoned for two months for the alleged theft

of twenty francs he adopted the name of "Almereyda" (an anagram of "y a (de) la merde — of shit) and following the discovery of an "unexploded bomb" (a little box of photographic magnesium) he was again arrested. Faced with the testimony of the Government chemist who declared the explosive in the box to be an "unknown formula of devastating power" he was sentenced at the age of 18 to a year in the Juvenile Prison of La Petite Rocquette on June 26th, 1901.

A campaign for his release from prison was launched by his companions and a few months later his name appeared in *Le Libertaire* as a signatory to an anti-militarist manifesto. He became active in the anti-militarist movement and acted as one of the French delegates to the 1904 international anti-militarist congress organised by the anarchist Domela Niewenhuis in Amsterdam. In the spring of 1903 Almereyda met Emily Clero and on April 25th, 1905 their son, Jean (nicknamed Nono) was born. As a baby he was carried by his parents from meeting to meeting. They lived an impoverished life and all were constantly in ill-health.

Soon after the anti-militarist congress Almereyda and Gustave Herve, who together had founded the French section of the *Association Internationale Anti-militarist*, were tried and imprisoned at Clairvaux for calling on conscripts to revolt. When liberated from prison by an amnesty in July 1906 they founded with Eugene Merle the weekly *La Guerre Sociale* with socialist, anarchist and trade unionist editors. The paper's constant appeals to soldiers led to a stream of arrests. Their anti-war demonstrations were characterised as "defeatist demonstrations" attracting the dislike of both the police and the right.

Miguel Almereyda remained in prison until August 1909. In spite of his bad health he immediately threw himself into the campaign in support of Francisco Ferrer, the anarchist teacher and founder of the Spanish "Modern" free schools who had been condemned to death in Barcelona. Almereyda played a prominent part in the demonstrations which culminated in a cortege of 500,000 people.

Jean, meanwhile, was sent to Montpellier (where Miguels step-father — Gabriel Aubes had opened a photographers shop) and was given a brief respite from the hectic life that was ruining his parents' health. Almereyda, however, was experiencing problems with the newspaper. Founded with the aim of uniting the left wing in France there was a rift, first with the revolutionary syndicalists (unionists) and then with the anarchists. In December 1912 Almereyda's break with the anarchists was complete and he joined the Socialist Party, founding a new paper *Le Bonnet Rouge* which became a daily a year later.

The outbreak of World War 1 deepened the rift within the left with former members of the Anti-militarist alliance adopting a position of allegiance in "defence of the republic". It was rumoured that *Le Bonnet Rouge* was encouraged into a position of "republican defence" by subsidies from Malvy, the Minister of the Interior. Certainly Almereyda's style of life became more opulent though his health steadily declined. Emily and Jean were installed in a villa at Saint-Cloud where the boy was sent to school but he saw little of his parents. Almereyda's articles in *Le Bonnet Rouge* became shorter and shorter and the paper adopted a pacifist line in the sense that it supported the various interests, both left and right, who sought a negotiated peace to end the war.

Almereyda was again arrested at Saint-Cloud on August 6th, 1917. By morning he was found dead, strangled in his cell. Jean Vigo was convinced that his father had been a victim of the struggle within the government towards the end of the war. It is possible that the Police settled a long-held score against him as soon as they could get to him outside of the protection of the Minister of the Interior.

Jean Vigo was twelve years old. The young pacifist writer, Jean de Saint-Prix saw him in a cafe "pale, sickly and taciturn" and wrote to a friend "We write articles about 'Jean Vigo' and the atrocious death of his father, without really thinking of this poor unhappy child. A lack of imagination".

Under the care of his grandfather, Gabriel Aubes, he was sent under the assumed name of "Jean Salles" to school at Millau working in the holidays in the photographers shop but his grandfather encouraged him to become a cinema projectionist.

By 1922 he was able to resume his own name and went to live in Paris with his mother. He set about gathering information seeking not only to demonstrate that Almereyda had not been a traitor, but that he had never ceased to be a revolutionary. He sought, however, only those friends of his father from his "anarchist" period before 1911 and became estranged from his mother because of her refusal to participate in his growing obsession with his fathers memory.

Ill health dogged him and after a period at the Sorbonne where he read ethics, sociology and psychology he left for Switzerland to enter a sanitorium. There he met Elisabeth Lozinska who later became his wife. Seeking a healthier climate, they settled at Nice where Vigo had gained a job as assistant cameraman in the Franco-Film Studios and were helped to furnish their house by Eugene Dieudone, an anarchist veteran of "Devil's Island". The job did not last, however, but Vigo continued to hang around the studios until Elizabeth's father lent them some money and they bought a cine camera.

Vigo's first film *A Propos de Nice* made with cameraman Boris Kaufman (who worked on all four of Vigo's films) contrasted the life of the rich visitors at the casino to that of the poor inhabitants

of the old city, the well nourished limbs of the holiday makers playing on the beach with the stunted and crippled limbs of the slum children. This fierce condemnation of what Vigo called ". . . a whole town begging from sheer laziness . . . the last twitchings of a society that neglects its own responsibilities to the point of giving you nausea and making you an accomplice in a revolutionary solution" (Derek Hill, *Sight and Sound)* showed a film maker using the camera with a fresh, personal approach.

Vigo's second documentary, a ten minute study of a celebrated swimmer called *Jean Taris: Champion de Nation*, hinted at the poetic qualities which were to charge every shot of his features.

Zero de Conduite followed in 1933. His first fiction film, it was shot in just 8 days, on an extremely limited budget, with a very young crew and few professional actors. The boys were mostly children from poorer districts of Paris and other parts were played by painters and poets of Vigo's acquaintance. The Prefect of Police was played by Gonzague-Frick, an anarchist poet, a friend of the young Almereyda. The fireman was played by a cartoonist of *La Guerre Sociale* and assistant Director Pierre Merle was the son of Eugene Merle, with whom Almereyda had founded *Le Guerre Sociale*.

It is a largely autobiographical account of his days in boarding school. Perhaps no other film until Truffaut's *The 400 Blows* (which has at least one sequence copied from Vigo) has captured the psychology and world of children with such insight. The theme of the film is the revolt of a number of boys against the repression of narrow discipline and evil living conditions in a sordid little French boarding school. It is realistic in so far as these conditions (the dormitory, classrooms, asphalt playground etc.) are faithfully observed. But it is almost surrealistic in its presentation of human relations. Presented from the viewpoint of the boys themselves the Junior Master is a "sport" so he develops into an acrobat who stands on his head in the classroom, imitates Charlie Chaplin and, when he takes the boys out for an 'airing', leads them in the pursuit of a girl down the street.

The most famous sequence of the film, the insurrection in the dormitory, finds the half-naked boys led by the four main conspirators as they let pillows fly, rip up mattresses and overturn beds. The scene is culminated in a slow motion sequence, in which the action takes on ritual-like proportions; with the music of Jaubert, it is as though the viewer has been pulled into the eye of a hurricane.

Vigo continued his homage to his father in *Zero de Conduite*. The boy's names are those of his own school friends, their individual sorrows and persecutions were those of the son of Almereyda. His father's experience in the Children's Prison of La Petite Roquette, which Almereyda described in *Le Libertaire* are faithfully recreated. And when the persecuted boy Tabard turns and bursts out "Monsieur, le professeur, je vous dis merde" ("Professor, to you I say shit!") he echoes a famous challenge addressed to the government which Almereyda had published in *La Guerre Sociale*, headed in large type "JE VOUS DIS MERDE".

Critical response to the film at the time of its release was mixed. One critic at the time (*Le Huron*, Vol 13, Nol IV, 1933) stated that "Monsieur Vigo, son of Almereyda, has just burst into films. But he has overshot the mark and fallen flat on his face." In the same issue it was reported that Georges de la Fouchardiere, an old anarchist and pacifist writer, had left his seat before the end of the film "raising his hands to the heavens of the cinema ceiling, his beard bristling and his hat awry", saying to friends around him "lavatory flushings!!" Criticism from the press and comrades aside the film was quickly banned by the authorities for (variously reported as) "anti-French sentiments" and its "attack" on French educational institutions.

The following year, as Vigo lay dying of tuberculosis, French distributors of his last film *L'Atlante* chose to make the film conform to their notions of what would be commercial by re-editing it, adding a popular melody and superimposing close-ups of music hall artists. Re-titled *Le Chaland Qui Passe* after its new theme song the film opened on the day that Vigo was buried, at the age of twenty-nine.

Vigo left four films, with a total running time of no more than 3½ hours. All his work was done in a hurry, working against the clock and against continual ill-health and always short of money.

> *Zero de Conduit* seems to me all but unblemished inspiration, moving freely and surely in its own unprecedented world from start to finish, one of the few great movie poems . . . it is one of the most visually eloquent and adventurous movies I have seen . . . the spirit of the film, its fierceness and gaiety, the total absence of well-constructed constructive diagnosis and prescription, the enormous liberating force of its quasi-nihilism, its humour, directness, kindliness, criminality and guile, form for me as satisfying a revolutionary expression as I know.
>
> James Agee, *The Nation.*

Compiled by Hilary May
based upon an article by John Ellery, (Anarchy Mazagine) and material made available by Howard Besser and the Pacific Film Archive, Berkeley, California.

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Additional Information about Anarchist Films

Pietro Ferrua, *Anarchists in Films*, First International Symposium on Anarchism, Lewis & Clark College, Portland, 1983

CIRA/Editions Noir, *Cinema et Anarchie*, International Centre for Anarchist Research, 1984 (In French Only)

Copies available from the Anarchist Film Archive and for sale at this Festival.